



North Central Idaho News

CLEARWATER, IDAHO, LATAH, LEWIS & NEZ PERCE COUNTIES

ECONOMIC TRENDS

The Lewiston Metropolitan Statistical Area's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in December decreased to 4.3 percent from November's rate of 4.7 percent as shown in North Central Idaho Table 1. In December 2005 the rate was 5.5 percent. Year-over-year there was a decrease of 470 jobs. The job decrease was mainly a result of decreases in manufacturing, services and government. December is the month that holiday hiring makes a significant impact in employment data. However, this year holiday employment was behind last year.

Special Topic: 2005 Regional Developments Overview

- Orofino was awarded a U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development grant for \$58,000 to study a houseboat marina and rental facility project at Dworshak Reservoir.
- Watco Companies Inc. and the Bountiful Grain & Craig Mountain Railroad announced a lease agreement allowing Bountiful Grain & Craig Mountain Railroad to take over the Great Northwest Railroad east of Lewiston to Kooskia. The lease encompasses approximately 75 miles of mainline track, including a portion of the railroad from Orofino to Konkolville.
- The Lodge at River's Edge in Orofino opened along with a new restaurant, the Edge, located next to the new hotel.
- Idaho Department of Fish and Game reported excellent fishing conditions on the Clearwater River.
- St. Gertrude's Monastery near Cottonwood opened a new \$3.4 million retreat within the century-old

North Central Idaho Table 1: Lewiston MSA Labor Force & Employment Nez Perce County, Idaho and Asotin County, Washington

	Dec 2005*	Nov 2005	Dec 2004	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
<i>Seasonally Adjusted</i>					
Civilian Labor Force	28,530	29,040	28,560	-1.8	-0.1
Unemployment	1,220	1,380	1,560	-11.6	-21.8
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.3	4.8	5.5		
Total Employment	27,310	27,660	27,000	-1.3	1.1
<i>Unadjusted</i>					
Civilian Labor Force	28,730	28,850	28,800	-0.4	-0.2
Unemployment	1,270	1,300	1,620	-2.3	-21.6
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.4	4.5	5.6		
Total Employment	27,460	27,550	27,180	-0.3	1.0
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS	26,450	26,530	26,920	-0.3	-1.7
<i>Goods-Producing Industries</i>					
Natural Resources & Mining	160	150	190	6.7	-15.8
Construction	1,230	1,310	1,220	-6.1	0.8
Manufacturing	2,830	2,830	2,990	0.0	-5.4
<i>Wood Product Manufacturing</i>	510	500	540	2.0	-5.6
<i>Food Manufacturing</i>	50	50	60	0.0	-16.7
<i>Paper Manufacturing</i>	1,110	1,110	1,140	0.0	-2.6
<i>Other Manufacturing</i>	1,160	1,170	1,250	-0.9	-7.2
<i>Service-Providing Industries</i>					
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	5,480	5,440	5,630	0.7	-2.7
<i>Wholesale Trade</i>	600	590	670	1.7	-10.4
<i>Retail Trade</i>	3,630	3,580	3,640	1.4	-0.3
<i>Utilities</i>	70	80	90	-12.5	-22.2
<i>Transportation & Warehousing</i>	1,180	1,190	1,230	-0.8	-4.1
Information	400	430	390	-7.0	2.6
Financial Activities	1,870	1,860	1,820	0.5	2.7
Professional & Business Services	1,580	1,600	1,560	-1.3	1.3
Education & Health Services	4,290	4,250	4,390	0.9	-2.3
Leisure & Hospitality	2,400	2,420	2,420	-0.8	-0.8
Other Services	1,110	1,110	1,120	0.0	-0.9
Government Education	2,500	2,520	2,470	-0.8	1.2
Government Administration	1,890	1,900	1,990	-0.5	-5.0
Government Tribes	710	710	730	0.0	-2.7

*Preliminary Estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

monastery building. The retreat ministry brings 9,000 to 10,000 people to Cottonwood each year.

- The nation's number one priority forest fire in August, the Blackerby Fire near Grangeville, had a devastating effect on the forest and the people who live near it, but the fire had a positive effect on local business with the increase of goods and services that were purchased during that time.

- With the second failure of a \$978,708 supplemental levy, Joint School District 241 asked boosters to raise funds for extracurricular activities. The district was \$293,952 short of funding extracurricular activities for Grangeville, Salmon River and Clearwater Valley schools.
- Bennett Forest Industries opened a new lumber mill in Grangeville in the former Ida-Pine mill site, which shut down in 1994. That mill replaced the Elk City mill that was shut down. Though new jobs were added, they are in Grangeville, not Elk City. The Elk City mill will be dismantled and some parts will be saved as spares for the new operation in Grangeville.
- Syringa General Hospital purchased the Idaho County Nursing Home, ending the uncertain future for the 47-year-old facility.
- Pacific Cabinets in Ferdinand launched a new business to handle additional laboratory and medical fixtures needed in medical environments.
- For fiscal year 2006, the University of Idaho dealt with a \$4.75 million shortfall that caused some departments to lose staff and others to eliminate programs. The real casualties of the 2006 budget were in the facilities maintenance and operations department, which received some of the deepest cuts from the first phase of the university's recovery plan.
- The city of Moscow experienced unexpected record-breaking levels of construction in 2005.
- Crews from around the area started constructing a new four-lane divided highway between Thorn Creek Road and Lewiston, replacing a two-lane portion of U.S. Highway 95.
- Synthetic Industries Corporation in Genesee closed in June putting 24 plant employees out of work. The plant produced erosion-control blankets made of wheat straw and coconut fiber.
- The Pullman-Moscow Regional Airport expanded the runway to accommodate landings for larger aircraft. The project was part of a solution the airport negotiated with the Federal Aviation Authority to lift a restriction against larger aircraft landing at the airport.
- Comtech Advanced Hardware Architecture Corp. moved into its new facility at the Alturas Research and Technology Park in Moscow. The company was located in Pullman, Wash., but needed a larger building to accommodate its growing needs. Comtech AHA Corp. designs and markets computer hardware, including chips and circuit boards.
- After a year of construction that virtually doubled its size, Gritman Medical Center in Moscow opened its new addition. The 52,000-square-foot, \$20 million addition was the largest in the hospital's 106-year history.
- The old school building in Troy was sold to Potting Shed Creations, a garden and gift company from Pullman, Wash.
- Kendall Dodge Chrysler Jeep purchased the Sacajawea Motor Inn, Helm Restaurant and Yacht Club. The auto dealer will demolish the businesses and relocate to the four-acre property. Forty employees worked at the 90-room hotel, 155-seat restaurant, lounge and convention center.
- High fuel prices have taken a bite out of what normally would have been a prosperous year for most area farmers.
- Settling years of litigation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will proceed with plans to dredge the Snake River.
- The Nez Perce tribe started construction on the Clearwater River hotel and casino resort.
- Regence broke ground for a 50,000 square-foot office in Lewiston. The project, estimated between \$8 million and \$9 million, makes room for 275 new jobs over a four- to five-year period.
- Potlatch Corp. believes it's developed a softer, stronger toilet paper that will dissolve quickly making it ideal for septic systems, boats and recreational vehicles.
- The Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee voted to accept the state's Snake River Basin Adjudication water rights settlement, trading most of the tribe's water rights for money and land.

CURRENT AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Clearwater

- Bald Mountain ski area opened in January. Skiers and snowboarders enjoyed feet of new snow. Bald Mountain offers ski and snowboard lessons, equipment rentals and a full-service snack bar and grill.

Idaho and Lewis counties

- Clearwater Forest Industries is cutting 20 employees from its Kooskia lumber mill. The Krogh family,

who owns the plant, also operates the Tamarack Mill in New Meadows, and some employees will move there. Trees will be cut into boards and lumber at the New Meadows mill, which has about 75 employees, and rough boards and lumber will be trucked to Kooskia for finishing. The 40 employees who remain in Kooskia will run a boiler, dry kilns and planers. The sawmill portion of the Kooskia mill will be auctioned off this spring. Clearwater Forest Industries is the only large-scale private business in Kooskia, a town of 675 people. The Krogh family also ran Ida-Pine sawmill in Grangeville, which closed in 1994.

Latah County

- Schweitzer Engineering, a Pullman-based electrical components manufacturer, announced in February that it will hire more than 200 new employees worldwide this year. Company founder Ed Schweitzer credits the company's growth to the employees who focus on customer needs and then apply technology to solve real-world energy problems. The majority of the 168 new jobs will be in Pullman. The demand for new employees comes both from increasing orders from existing customers and expansion into new markets. The company invents, designs, manufactures and distributes components for electrical grid systems, both municipal and industrial. Its protective electrical relays monitor grids and can scramble information to protect them from attack. Its products became especially popular after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Schweitzer Engineering added 210 new employees last year, 137 in Pullman. Since he founded the company in 1982, Ed Schweitzer's business has grown to employ almost 1,200 full-time employees at 50 locations worldwide, 860 in Pullman. The new hires will be engineers, technicians, secretaries, customer service representatives, assemblers, trainers and administrators.

Nez Perce and Asotin counties

- Spring enrollment at Lewis-Clark State College increased slightly over one year earlier. According

to figures released to the State Board of Education, 28 percent of new spring freshmen and 42 percent of transfer students are first-generation college students. Overall enrollment was 3,233 students, a 1 percent increase over last year. Enrollment is up 11 percent over the last five years, according to college officials.

- SkyWest has announced it's in Lewiston for good. The service will continue even though its year-long government subsidy ended Jan. 31. "Things are going just fine in Lewiston and our intention is to stay," said Sabrena Suite, spokeswoman for SkyWest from St. George, Utah. SkyWest flights have been running 69 percent full, which is within targets of 65 percent to 75 percent. The agreement that brought SkyWest to Lewiston guaranteed \$3,500 in revenue per flight to a maximum of \$600,000.
- Increasing ships calling at the Port of Portland is vital to ports upriver such as the Ports of Lewiston, Clarkston and Wilma. More than a year after losing shipping service from two container lines with links to Asia, the Port of Portland says a turnaround is at hand. One container shipping company has decided to establish Portland service, and a second line soon will decide whether to do the same. Yang Ming Marine Transport Corporation has decided to begin Portland service, probably in June. Yang Ming will drop a call to Vancouver, British Columbia, in favor of Portland. Yang Ming initially would use five vessels capable of carrying 1,500 standard containers with stops in Tacoma, Taiwan and China. Those ships are expected to be replaced by vessels 2.5 times larger in 2007. The second shipping line is Zim Integrated Shipping Services Ltd., which is in negotiations with the Port.

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